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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHAN (Pakistan)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 87: MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS (continued)

(c) EXTERNAL DEBT CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 89: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(d) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 88: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(a) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(b) FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(c) COMMODITIES (continued)

(d) CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(e) INTEGRATION OF THE ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION INTO THE WORLD ECONOMY (continued)

(f) INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued)

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CONTENTS (continued)

(g) UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II) (continued)

(h) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued)

(i) UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE ON OPPORTUNITY AND PARTICIPATION (continued)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/C.2/49/L.15)

1. Mr. AWAAD (Egypt) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.15 entitled "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli settlements on the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, occupied since 1967, and on the Arab population of the Syrian Golan".

AGENDA ITEM 87: MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS (continued)

(c) EXTERNAL DEBT CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/49/L.12)

2. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.12 entitled "Enhanced international cooperation towards a durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries".

AGENDA ITEM 89: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(d) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (continued) (A/C.2/49/L.13)

3. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.13, noting that it was purely procedural and that the sponsors urged its adoption by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 88: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued) A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/229, A/49/256, A/49/307, A/49/378, A/49/381, A/49/395, A/49/412-S/1994/1078, A/49/422-S/1994/1086, A/49/424 and Add.1, A/49/479, A/49/493-S/1994/1142, A/49/506, A/49/541)

(a) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/49/15, (vol. I and II), A/49/227 and Add.1 and 2, A/49/228-S/1994/827, A/49/277, A/49/363)

(b) FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/49/438, A/49/507)

(c) COMMODITIES (continued) (A/49/226, A/49/228-S/1994/827, S/1994/894 and Corr.1)

(d) CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/49/159-E/1994/62 and Add.1 and 2)

(e) INTEGRATION OF THE ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION INTO THE WORLD ECONOMY (continued) (A/49/330)

(f) INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued) (A/49/347, A/49/372)

(g) UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (Habitat II) (continued) A/49/37, A/49/272, A/49/640)

(h) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued) (A/49/572)

(i) UNITED NATIONS INITIATIVE ON OPPORTUNITY AND PARTICIPATION (continued) (A/49/287-S/1994/894 and Corr.1, A/49/541)

4. Mr. GARCIA-BERCERO (Observer for the European Community) said that trade had become the most effective means to mobilize resources to finance the development process. In the period between 1986 and 1992, the overall value of developing country exports of goods and services had doubled. As a result of their increased participation in international trade, the developing countries had become major players in the world economy. Thus, open markets on the basis of multilateral trade rules offered the best guarantee for the integration of developing countries and countries with economies in transition into a dynamic world economy. The agreements reached in Marrakesh were historic since they reflected the international community's decision to opt for a rule-based multilateral trading system and to abandon protectionist trade policies.

5. In order to derive the full benefits from the increased trade opportunities, the least developed countries would have to enhance their competitiveness by adopting stable macroeconomic policies and an open framework for trade and investment that emphasized the role of the private sector. If they focused merely on short-term results such as the erosion of preferential margins, they would detract attention from the real issue, namely, the need to enhance competitiveness. Countries whose economies were in transition must also concentrate on open markets and creating a favourable investment climate that would attract the private sector.

6. The relationship between trade and environment policies represented a new challenge for trade relations. The European Union welcomed the important work being carried out in that area by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Trade, Environment and Development whose mandate referred inter alia to the need to establish rules to enhance the positive interaction between trade and environmental measures, avoid protectionist trade measures and ensure the responsiveness of the multilateral trading system to environmental objectives.

7. Mr. NIE Hualiang (China) said that, in the view of his delegation, every effort should be made to enable more countries to be original members of the World Trade Organization in order to make it more widely representative. China had already applied for resumption of its status as a contracting party to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In view of China's growing importance in world trade, it would be inconceivable for it not to be a member of the World Trade Organization.

8. Turning to UNCTAD, he said that its role in providing technical assistance to developing countries should be further strengthened. His delegation also

called upon the international community to adopt measures to encourage investment in and technology transfer to the least developed countries. In view of the continuing decline in commodity prices, it was imperative to convene a world conference on commodities bringing together producers, consumers and the marketing sectors.

9. Shelter was one of the fundamental conditions for human survival. If the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements was to have a positive impact on human settlements, it must maintain its focus on the themes of "shelter for all" and "human settlements development in an urbanizing world".

10. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (A/49/572) left much to be desired. Indeed, it had been submitted so late and its content was so vague that his delegation wondered whether eradication of poverty was a priority objective of the United Nations. The programme for the International Year should reflect the fact that combating poverty was not only a moral obligation but a matter of human solidarity. He hoped that Member States would be consulted on the preparation of the final report which was to be submitted in 1995. His delegation would also like to know whether the ad hoc working group to prepare the draft programme for the observance of the Year was to be an intergovernmental group or a group of experts. He pointed out that the proposed timetable outlined in the report allowed very little time for Member States to consider the draft programme before its adoption by the General Assembly.

11. The eradication of poverty called for concrete activities which should be carried out progressively based on a timetable defined at the international and the national levels. In that context, he drew attention to the objectives relating to poverty elimination set forth in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. The World Summit for Social Development would provide an opportunity for taking stock of the progress made towards meeting the goals of the International Development Strategy and developing new measures and activities. He called inter alia for greater involvement of the non-governmental organizations in the implementation of programmes aimed at reducing poverty, and for greater efforts to cancel the official debt and to reduce the multilateral debt of the least developed countries. Special attention must be given to such matters as collecting data on poverty, particularly on women and children, the effects of structural adjustment programmes, and access to basic education, family planning and primary health care. His delegation supported the proposal to hold a high-level inter-institutional meeting to define a common approach to social indicators that could be used system-wide.

12. Mr. BATU (Turkey), speaking on agenda item 88 (g) concerning the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), called on the General Assembly to endorse the Secretary-General's proposal that it should be a summit-level conference. The Conference should be the culmination of the series of major United Nations conferences held during the 1990s and its global plan of action should incorporate the relevant recommendations made at those earlier conferences.

13. All issues discussed at Habitat II should be people-centred. National delegations should include, in addition to government representatives, representatives also of business, academic and scientific circles, non-governmental organizations and the media. There should be at least one sessional committee of the Conference to provide for exchanges of views and experience among those participants, and each Government should present some of its national experience in audio-visual form. The developing countries should be given financial and technical assistance to enable them to prepare such audio-visual presentations.

14. His delegation fully supported the Preparatory Committee's recommendation that it should be allowed to hold a third substantive session, in early 1996, and he urged the secretariats of all relevant organizations of the United Nations system to play an active part in the preparations for the Conference. As the host country, Turkey was committed to ensuring the Conference's success.

15. Mr. ABDUL MOMIN (Brunei Darussalam), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in relation to agenda item 88 (a) entitled "Trade and development", said that trade between ASEAN countries had risen sharply in 1994, as had their imports from countries outside the region. He attributed the favourable performance to a number of factors. All ASEAN countries were pursuing export-oriented strategies and favoured market-oriented economic policies, which they felt would lead to a greater accumulation of resources and improved resource allocation. In addition, they had begun to take bold measures towards greater trade liberalization among themselves. The target date for the establishment of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) had been brought forward and products that had initially been excluded were to be gradually incorporated in the scheme. At the same time, AFTA would not raise trade barriers against third countries. The reduction of tariffs among ASEAN countries parallelled their programmes of trade liberalization at the multilateral level, with "open regionalism" as their guiding principle.

16. While the ASEAN countries, individually and collectively, welcomed the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, they felt that in areas such as agriculture, trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, anti-dumping laws and textiles the results were weighted in favour of the developed countries. It was important to ensure that the Marrakesh agreements were ratified as soon as possible. ASEAN felt that the developed countries had a moral responsibility to take the lead in that regard.

17. ASEAN felt that it would be prudent to concentrate on implementing the results of the Uruguay Round before discussing certain sensitive issues concerning the World Trade Organization. It was also concerned that some developed countries were attempting to link trade to social clauses, human rights and environmental issues; such linkages could be used as a pretext for protectionism. There should be no preconditions for trade that would impede economic growth and development. The establishment of the World Trade Organization would ensure greater certainty in the conduct of world trade. The strengthened dispute settlement mechanism, for example, would enhance the

credibility of the existing trading regime. However, the relationship between the new organization and the United Nations should be clearly defined.

18. Mr. GOVINDASAMY (Singapore) said that it was regrettable that, while the developing countries and countries with economies in transition were embarking on painful reforms, some developed countries were increasing their use of non-tariff barriers and anti-dumping and countervailing measures. His delegation was also concerned that some developed countries were attempting to introduce minimum labour and environmental standards and even human rights concerns into international trade agreements. The imposition of such standards could become a disguised form of protectionism. The setting of minimum labour standards would erode the developing countries' comparative advantages and impede their economic growth and development.

19. There was a complementary relationship between the developed and the developing world. By actively trading in world markets, the developing countries would be able to raise their income levels and, consequently, be able to purchase capital goods and services from developed countries. The developed countries that had comparative advantages in the production of such goods and services would benefit because of the increased markets in the developing countries. The developed countries should help integrate the developing countries and economies in transition into the world economy by increasing the latter's access to their markets instead of putting up trade barriers.

20. His delegation welcomed the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations. The establishment of the World Trade Organization was a major achievement. His delegation urged those who had not yet ratified the Final Act embodying the results of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations to do so without further delay.

21. The expansion of trade within regional groups fuelled economic growth. In particular, the dynamic economic growth of the East Asian countries could be attributed to increasing intra-regional trade. However, there was always the danger that regional trade arrangements could become exclusive; regional blocs that shielded the region from competition would stifle growth. Regional initiatives were a stepping-stone, not an alternative, to the multilateral trading system.

22. Economic cooperation among the members of ASEAN and, in particular, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) initiative were an example of successful South-South cooperation. AFTA would be established through a common effective preferential tariff scheme over a period of 10 years. The ASEAN countries were not inward-looking, and the Association's endorsement of AFTA did not detract from its commitment to a multilateral trading system. A large part of the trade of the ASEAN countries was with other countries.

23. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council was another example of economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. The countries members of the Council were committed to the principle that "open regionalism" must continue to govern regional cooperation and investment. His delegation fully supported the

goal of free trade in the Asia-Pacific region and was convinced that the reduction of trade barriers within regional groups and its extension to other groups would ultimately enhance global welfare.

24. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), after briefly reviewing the food situation of the various regions, said that while the world food security situation would probably continue to improve, some countries and even entire regions might see little improvement. In sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, the level of under-nutrition was likely to rise still further. The way to ease those problems was not so much to increase world food production but to encourage sustainable development in low-income countries. Many of those countries were heavily dependent on agriculture for employment and income; thus renewal of efforts to develop their agriculture was perhaps the most important priority in the foreseeable future.

25. FAO was fully committed to the broadened concept of food security, which included all aspects of the socio-economic development process that had an impact on food security. FAO had developed a methodology for preparing comprehensive national food security programmes, which had been tested in four African countries and two African subregions. Sixteen countries and two more subregions were currently applying a revised version of the methodology. Experience had shown the importance of using a country's overall agricultural development strategy as an instrument to achieve food security objectives, especially in the low-income food-deficit countries.

26. Food insecurity for rural households, especially in the low-income food-deficit countries, was largely related to low labour productivity in agriculture, for both small farmers working their own land and labourers working for cash wages. It was not enough to generate more employment opportunities for those people if labour productivity did not improve. The special programme on food production in support of food security in low-income food-deficit countries sought to expand both productivity and total production of staple foods in target countries. With regard to food supply, FAO had proposed that greater emphasis should be placed on promoting technology transfer in an equitable and sustainable manner. Such action would not only focus on the application of more efficient production technologies but would also address such matters as pricing policies, credit facilities and other factors that might affect the impact of such technologies.

27. If women were to participate in development efforts, development specialists and policy makers must be sensitized to gender issues, and national capacities and the capacity of the United Nations system as a whole must be strengthened to permit the development of gender-responsive projects, programmes and policies. In the implementation of its Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development, FAO had placed special emphasis on social and gender analysis training. In addition, FAO provided assistance for the assessment of food security and nutritional status, which included gender-specific data collection and dissemination. Gender-related issues were also considered in the activities of the Early Warning Food Information Systems relating to

surveillance, the development of food and nutrition policies and the integration of nutrition concerns into development policies and programmes.

28. FAO continued to place considerable emphasis on commodity trade problems. One of the dominant trends in agricultural commodity markets had been the tendency for countries to take steps unilaterally to offset effects of international price declines and price instability. Many developed and developing countries had adopted a national approach to price stabilization, which aggravated the international situation by reducing the extent to which those countries could absorb fluctuation in world markets. In adopting a national policy response to declining and unstable world prices, many developing countries were at a distinct disadvantage, since they could not afford to provide extensive protection for their agriculture nor invest in research and development to boost productivity.

29. With the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, the emphasis on various commodity problems would change. There would be continued interest and involvement in questions of market stability and the related issues of market transparency, monitoring and information-gathering and long-run studies of supply and demand. FAO would continue to monitor and assess the evolution of protectionism in agriculture. The role of its Principles of Surplus Disposal in food aid would also grow in importance following their recognition in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round. In the light of the increasing trend to adopt sophisticated environmental policies with trade implications, FAO had begun work on the technical and economic assessment of the impact of the production of individual commodities on the environment. Finally, new end uses of agricultural commodities of better quality and lower cost would need to be developed to meet new market requirements and environmental standards.

30. Rural poverty was usually linked to inadequate access to land and other means of production. Since 1979, FAO had been committed to the principles adopted by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, which stressed the need for equitable access to land, employment and services to ensure sustainable development for all and prevent poverty. However, sometimes the poorest and most vulnerable groups were not the main beneficiaries of policies to eradicate rural poverty. In 1994, FAO had begun a new research programme to assist member nations to improve the design of policies, programmes and projects to combat rural poverty and ensure people's participation in development efforts.

31. Unfortunately, in spite of their predominant contribution to agricultural production in so many parts of the developing world, women were still overrepresented among the rural poor and were still confronted with considerable discrimination. The FAO Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development provided a framework for addressing those problems and benefiting women agricultural producers at all levels of society. In that context, FAO promoted concerted efforts to enhance rural women's civil status, economic empowerment, social emancipation and decision-making capacity.

32. Mr. BRAITHWAITE (Australia), speaking on behalf of the Cairns Group, said that with the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations an improved set of rules had been established for agricultural trade. The Cairns Group accounted for about one third of the world's agricultural exports and represented nearly the same number of people as the combined populations of the European Union and the United States of America. The Agreement on Agriculture would have an important impact on the way agricultural policies developed in future. Throughout the Uruguay Round, the Cairns Group had demonstrated that small and medium-sized countries working together with a shared objective could exert considerable influence on international trade policy. The Cairns Group would continue to promote fair trade in agriculture and insist on the full and prompt implementation of agriculture commitments under the Uruguay Round.

33. Mr. CHALISE (Nepal) said that his delegation fully shared the concern expressed by many delegations with regard to the limited progress that had been achieved in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. The international community had lagged behind in terms of implementing its commitments to assist the least developed countries in their efforts to achieve the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action. The High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action would provide an opportunity for action. The Trade and Development Board had already taken the first step by adopting conclusions on such critical areas as human capacity-building, official development assistance (ODA) and foreign debt and foreign trade.

34. The General Assembly at its forty-ninth session should approve the Trade and Development Board's recommendation to convene a high-level meeting of least developed countries from 26 September to 6 October 1995. The Assembly should also ensure that other necessary and useful activities, including a preparatory meeting of governmental experts of the least developed countries, donor countries and institutions and regional, sectoral and inter-agency preparatory meetings took place on time. It should also request the Secretary-General to provide adequate resources for those activities and for the full participation of the representatives of the least developed countries and UNCTAD.

35. With respect to food and agriculture, he hoped that the decision taken at Marrakesh to establish appropriate mechanisms to offset the negative effects on least developed countries resulting from the agreements would be implemented swiftly. He agreed with the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) that there was an urgent need for a new age of global industrial partnership and that no region or group of countries should be marginalized.

36. Concerning preparations for the Habitat II Conference, the international community should give adequate attention to the rapidly increasing urban population all over the world. The obvious link between population, development and environment called for a concerted approach to both urban and rural

development. In that connection, particular attention should be paid to the needs of the urban poor, especially women.

37. Turning to the eradication of poverty, he noted that several reports and programmes already existed on the subject and that all that was required was international cooperation and support in order to implement them.

38. Mr. SAMHAN (United Arab Emirates), speaking on agenda item 88 (g) concerning the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), said that the international community would have to redouble its efforts to address the problems of overcrowding and deteriorating social, environmental and economic conditions that normally accompanied rapid urbanization. Since its foundation, the United Arab Emirates had sought to create stable living conditions for the family as the basic unit of society, building housing units with appropriate sanitary facilities and providing the requisite support services in terms of public utilities and projects designed to raise living standards and provide useful skills and expertise. The problems of desertification and aridity had been addressed through the reclamation and cultivation of large tracts of land. The role and responsibility of the individual had been enhanced, and women were viewed as having a major part to play in the development of society.

39. His country had recently hosted the second Arab preparatory meeting for Habitat II, and another one was shortly to be held in the emirate of Dubai. It was hoped that the recommendations emanating therefrom would contain ideas for a global plan of action and lay the basis for a statement of principles and commitments which could be discussed at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II.

40. The municipal council of Dubai city was currently implementing a technical cooperation project in coordination with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) that was the first of its kind in the world. Under the project, cities and non-governmental organizations in a number of developing countries were being offered assistance in documenting and disseminating the best methods of municipal administration and in improving urban living conditions.

41. Mr. ADRIKO (Uganda) said that his Government attached great importance to human settlements because it recognized that adequate shelter was a basic prerequisite for the full development of the human person. Indeed, in many developing countries, progress with respect to human settlements policies, programmes and projects had been unsatisfactory because of a shortage of resources and a lack of expertise; that situation had been aggravated by other factors such as civil strife and natural disasters. The result was an expanding stream of displaced persons and rural migrants who were putting increasing pressure on the urban centres. An effective international strategic response needed to be evolved to address those problems.

42. He noted that the African Ministers responsible for human settlements had met recently in Nairobi, in connection with the Preparatory Process for

Habitat II, and had adopted a declaration endorsing the two major themes for the Conference. They had also focused attention on critical issues such as the need for human settlements policies in Africa to address the requirements of urban and rural areas simultaneously and promote appropriate linkages between the two to achieve a balanced development, and the need to ensure access to land and shelter for the majority of the population. It had also been recognized that the successful preparation and implementation of Habitat II would depend to a large extent on the commitment of the international community to provide financial support.

43. At the national level, he said that a national committee had been established and had drawn up a comprehensive national plan which it had submitted to the Conference secretariat. Finally, his delegation supported the proposal that the Preparatory Committee should hold a third session in early 1996 to help the Secretariat put the final touches to the documents and he appealed, on behalf of the least developed countries, for adequate resources to support the Conference's secretariat so that it could fully assist the developing countries with their national preparatory efforts.

44. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that the economies in transition had enormous economic potential and could contribute to the development of the world economy. Accordingly, Japan would provide them with the assistance they needed without diverting resources from developing countries. Moreover, because needs varied, assistance should be decided on a case-by-case basis.

45. Noting that almost all recent United Nations conferences had taken up the subject of development, he said that, important though the issue was, dealing with it at every major international gathering was a wasteful duplication of effort and he hoped that Habitat II would concentrate on achieving its original goals. However, in the light of the major challenges posed by the rapid increases in population, particularly in urban areas, it was extremely important to keep in mind the outcome of the International Conference on Population and Development throughout the preparatory process for Habitat II.

46. Mrs. MBOYA (Kenya) referring to the heavy dependence of African countries on a few commodities for their export earnings, said that concerted action must be taken to support the diversification process, and that the immediate establishment of a commodity fund for Africa was critical.

47. Turning to the issue of human settlements she noted that although there were regional differences, all cities faced the same challenges. In addition to the problems of refugees and displaced persons, the pace of urbanization was accelerating as a result of the number of people flocking to urban areas in search of employment. Increasing urbanization was therefore an irreversible phenomenon and it was to be hoped that Habitat II would provide a new orientation and policies to address issues such as adequate provision of shelter and infrastructure, the resulting adverse environmental impact of accelerated urbanization on natural resources and proper management of cities.

48. At the national level, Kenya had established a national steering committee on Habitat II which had initiated consultations with a view to elaborating an effective national plan of action concerning human settlements and formulating a national environment action plan to integrate environmental considerations into national development programmes. At the regional level, it had participated in the recent meeting of African ministers responsible for human settlements in connection with the preparatory process for Habitat II.

49. In that connection she urged that adequate resources should be made available from the regular budget of the United Nations to the Conference secretariat so that it could carry out the preparations needed to ensure the success of the Conference. Donors should also contribute to the two funds established by the General Assembly so as to enable developing countries to participate fully and effectively in the Conference and its preparatory process.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.